Journal of Yoga Studies
Yoga and the Traditional Physical Practices of South Asia • 2023 | 375 – 412
Published: 10th April 2023

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34000/JoYS.2023.V4.011
ISSN: 2664-1739

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IS THERE SUCH A THING AS CHINESE YOGA? INDIAN POSTURAL THERAPIES IN MEDIAEVAL CHINA

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Abstract

China has an unbroken history of therapeutic stretches, gymnastics, and callisthenic practices—collectively known as *daoyin*—that date back to the 2nd century BCE. Yet, despite a robust indigenous tradition, an iconic and influential set of eighteen *daoyin* postures was originally labelled an "Indian massage method" or "Brahmanic callisthenics" when it first surfaced in Daoist texts and medical treatises around the 6th or 7th century. Indeed, those eighteen postures bear a striking resemblance to bodily disciplines associated with traditional physical practices in India. In the first part of the chapter, we examine the earliest Chinese sources of the so-called "Indian massage methods," namely, the Daoist scripture known as *Daolin's Treatise on Maintaining Life* and the physician Sun Simiao's (d. 682) *Essential Emergency Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Gold [Pieces]*. In the second part of the paper, we turn to the question of how these foreign practices were "naturalised" and renegotiated as native therapies. In a third section, we will consider the further peregrinations of "Brahmanic callisthenics" by following their traces in European accounts of Chinese self-cultivation techniques. We will seek to untangle the threads connecting Jesuit accounts and mediaeval Sino-Indian methods. We will also succinctly reflect on the reception of biospiritual disciplines in early-modern Europe and their re-circulation in India.

KEYWORDS

Yoga, Mediaeval China, Daoism, Postures, *Āsana*, *Daoyin*, Guiding and Stretching, Chinese Medicine, Transcultural Circulation, Indology, Sinology.

Introduction

Yes, there is such a thing as "Chinese Yoga." Bookstores and internet searches tell us so. But as it appears on shelves or results pages, "Chinese Yoga" is more a product of savvy marketing than historical fact. It is a rebranding of *qigong*, "vital-breath skill," a Chinese therapeutic practice consisting of regulated breathing combined with slow movements or stretches, and sometimes, static postures. *Qigong*, however, is itself a 20th-century manufactured trend resulting from Chinese communist historical revisionism, scientism, and anti-religion campaigns. Much of the *qigong* practised in China and the world today was devised between the 1950s and the 1980s; but even if it was thoroughly transformed, sanitised, and purged of its "superstitious" and "counter-revolutionary" elements, *qigong* is still rooted in earlier traditions, some of them going back to the turn of the 1st millennium. These older practices, which also centred on breathing, stretching, and postures, largely fall under the heading of *daoyin*, or "guiding and stretching." Thus, the question, while reformulated, remains: excluding the recent developments of *qigong* and so-called "Chinese Yoga," was historical *daoyin* in any way related to Indian disciplines of self-cultivation that can be described as postural or *āsana*-based?

The answer is not straightforward, but we may nevertheless identify a few cases of possible interchange that constitute indices of a broader Asian or even global confluence on the subject of postural practices. In brief, what I aim to accomplish in the present study is to provide a general overview of these cases, with particular focus on two mediaeval Chinese sets of guiding and stretching. Given this volume's general focus on the Indian Subcontinent, the following pages will remain largely synoptic and intelligible, I hope, to readers outside of the specialisations of Chinese religions or Chinese medicine. Accordingly, a good portion of the chapter is devoted to, firstly, contextualising *daoyin* source materials and, secondly, to surveying pioneering works on the topic of Indian posture-based exercises in mediaeval China (or vice versa, Chinese practices in India). Thirdly, the study also aims to develop some of the arguments in these works or to contribute new viewpoints when appropriate.

Accordingly, this study is divided into four sections. The first situates *daoyin* in its historical framework of self-cultivation and longevity-bestowing practices. The second and third sections focus on two Chinese sources that unambiguously identify India as the origin of the *daoyin* postures they present. The fourth and last section of the chapter frames those postures in a larger continuing conversation about connections, parallels, and the circulation of ideas and practices revolving around Daoist or yogic self-

cultivation. The conclusion further expands the scope of inquiry to consider briefly the dynamics of this interchange in a multipolar global framework.

A Brief History of *Daoyin*, or Guiding and Stretching

The term *daoyin* can be glossed as "gymnastics" or "callisthenics," but we will opt here for a more literal translation, "guiding [vital breath] and stretching [the body],"[1] as this preserves the practice's double nature.[2] Indeed, the first mention of the term *daoyin* dates back to the late 4th-century BCE Daoist classic, the *Book of Master Zhuang* (*Zhuangzi* 15), where it is described primarily as a type of regulated breathing combined with stretches:

> Blowing and breathing, expiring and inspiring, exhaling the old and inhaling the new [breath]; [moving like] a bear hanging [from a tree] or a bird craning [its neck], for the purpose of longevity and nothing more. This is what masters of guiding and stretching, those people who nourish their form [i.e. their body, as opposed to their spirit] to reach the old age of Ancestor Peng are fond of.[3]

The passage is somewhat critical in tone, contrasting the mundane pursuit of longevity with the higher calling of the sage, who embarks on the Way (*dao*) without deliberate intention (*keyi*), unburdened by specific practices or even precise goals. Nevertheless, it offers an early impression of the key features of *daoyin*: it notably stresses the importance of a) breathing techniques along with those of b) stretches and postures. In this case and more generally, stretches and postures are inspired by the movements of beasts and creatures. Thus, c) animal symbolism is another recurring feature of *daoyin*. Lastly, d) the focus on longevity and thereby health lends a therapeutic dimension to

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[1] Alternatively, *daoyin* can also be translated as "guiding and pulling"; according to this interpretation, practitioners "guide" pathogens or noxious infected forms of vital breath towards the body's points of egress and subsequently "pull" them out, permanently; see the *Treatise on the Origins and Symptoms of Disease* (*Zhubing yuanhou lun*), 22.1512, cited in Despeux 1989: 239; on the various interpretations of and possible translations for *daoyin*, see Dolly Yang 2018: 29–34; see also Vivienne Lo 2014: 3 n.1.

[2] For a primary source-based overview of *daoyin*, see Despeux 1989: 225–261; Kohn 2006: 123–150, offers an informative comparison of theoretical and practical overlap between yoga and *daoyin*, but she does not cover any of the historical or cultural points of contact, actual or potential, nor does she examine possible instances of textual transmission.

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. For a recent complete translation of the source, see Ziporyn 2020.

guiding and stretching. These four features would remain largely unchanged and consistent throughout the subsequent two millennia, down to the *qigong* and the "Chinese Yoga" of today.

Although the *Book of Master Zhuang* briefly refers to *daoyin*, the earliest extant developed treatments date from a few hundred years later in the shape of two documents excavated from 2nd-century BCE tombs. The first, the "Chart of Guiding and Stretching" (**Daoyin tu*)[4] consists of forty-four illustrations of postures with partial captions. The images have been restored to what must have been their original vividness in reconstructed facsimiles (Fig. 1). Many captions are damaged, but from those that survive, it is clear that the postures were designed to treat certain ailments or, more globally, to increase well-being and longevity (Harper 1998: 25, 310–327).

Figure 1: The forty-four *daoyin* postures from a restored reproduction of the 2nd-century BCE "Chart of Guiding and Stretching" unearthed in 1973 from Mawangdui Tomb 3, in Changsha, Hunan, China. Wikimedia Commons.

A few of the captions have cognates in the other early excavated document, the *Book of Stretches* (*Yinshu*), dated to the second half of the 2nd century BCE.[5] The contents are composed of three sections that deal with: a) tending life and treating illness through daily hygiene regimens in accordance with the time of year; b) simple *daoyin* movements for alleviating ailments or improving health; and c) an aetiology of

[4] The titles of manuscript sources assigned by modern scholars or editors are marked by an asterisk. Titles that survive or otherwise exist in manuscripts are listed without an asterisk.

[5] See Lo's 2014 annotated translation and study; see also Harper 1998: 30–33.

afflictions and corresponding remedies, the latter of which refers back to some of the postures from the previous section. A sample exercise from the *daoyin* section of the *Book of Stretches* 15 reads as follows:

> "Mallards Bathing": oppose and join the hands [behind] the back and shake the head.[6]

Even in this succinct example, three of the four major features of *daoyin* are represented: stretches and postures, animal symbolism, and a (contextual) focus on health. Only breathing is absent from the equation here, but it is present in other poses from the same text and more or less implied in all of them: key stretches in the movements could only be performed by naturally holding one's breath, just as exhaling went hand-in-hand with contracting certain muscles.[7]

Regulated breathing was an important component of guiding [vital breath] and stretching [the body], as the name suggests, but it also constituted its own genre of self-cultivation, known as "circulating vital breath" (*xingqi*). The practices of 1) guiding and stretching; 2) circulating vital breath; as well as 3) dietetics (literally, "avoiding grains"; *pigu*), which consisted of avoiding cooked, refined or otherwise processed foods; 4) sexual practices, euphemistically referred to as "bedchamber arts" (*fangzhong shu*);[8] and 5) the consumption of medicinal substances (*yao*) were classified together under the rubric of "Nourishing Life" (*yangsheng*) beginning from the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). This was an interconnected complex of physical disciplines in classical China that coalesced around the scope of restoring health and increasing longevity.[9] Each category, including *daoyin*, constituted its own distinct discipline but the boundaries separating them were considerably blurry. As noted above, breathing techniques that fell under the rubric of circulating vital breath were often integrated into guiding and stretching,

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[6] Translation from Lo 2014: 21, with minor modifications.

[7] For a sample of movements where breathing is specifically mentioned, see *Book of Stretches*, strips 32–36; Lo 2014: 44– 50.

[8] The arts of the bedchamber are sometimes dubbed "Chinese Sexual Yoga" in works addressed to non-specialist audiences; see for example, Wile 1992. Yet, these techniques have no demonstrated connection to yoga nor India. For a more sober take on the subject, see Van Gulik 2003. On the topic of Sino-Indian interchange, see my discussion of the later medicalisation of the "arts of the bedchamber" and the impact of Indian Ayurvedic notions (brought to China through the vector of Buddhism), in Steavu 2017. See also below.

[9] Once more, the 4th-century BCE Daoist classic, the *Book Master Zhuang*, is the first text to record and discuss the concept of Nourishing Life, albeit curtly; see Chapter 3, passim.

but they were also habitually prescribed together with dietetic regimens and the ingestion of medicines.[10]

Since immortality cults and the early forms of Daoism that emerged from them shared the twin goals of physical wellbeing and extended lifespan, Nourishing Life became an important part of formal Daoist traditions. The Daoist Canon houses a plethora of texts on Nourishing Life and several dozen among them contain *daoyin* exercises. Nevertheless, only a single source, the *Scripture on Nourishing Life through Guiding and Stretching* (*Daoyin yangsheng jing*) is exclusively devoted to the topic of guiding and stretching, and it is relatively late, dating from around the middle of the 8th century.[11] Despite the popularity Nourishing Life practices enjoyed as part of the Daoist self-cultivation curriculum, they were also commonly undertaken in non-religious settings, outside of the framework of institutional religion. The foundational 4th-century *Collected Essentials on Nourishing Life* (*Yangsheng yaoji*) is suggestive of how broadly they were practised in non-initiate circles. Thorough and widely circulated, this was the principal exposition on Nourishing Life and *daoyin* for a number of centuries. It also constituted the root source for much of content found in Daoist texts, including the *Scripture on Nourishing Life through Guiding and Stretching*. Regrettably, the *Collected Essentials on Nourishing Life* was lost over a thousand years ago, but it partially survives in citations and fragments.[12]

In parallel to or perhaps as a result of its dissemination outside of cultic or religious milieux, Nourishing Life was also subsumed into medical currents that were developing and formalising during the early mediaeval period, around the same time as Daoism. The *Treatise on the Origins and Symptoms of Disease* (*Zhubing yuanhou lun*), compiled in 610 CE, is the most complete, extant, mediaeval source on guiding and stretching.[13] This exhaustive nosology aggregates roughly two hundred *daoyin* postures. It copiously cites medical sources from preceding centuries, but it also quotes lost Nourishing Life manuals, making it an invaluable resource for the partial recovery of no longer extant materials; it draws in large measure on the *Collected Essentials on Nourishing Life*, but also

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[10] See for instance *Book of Stretches* 53–54; Lo 2014: 64.

[11] On this source, see Livia Kohn 2008: 98–127.

[12] On the *Collected Essentials on Nourishing Life* (*Yangsheng yaoji*) and its role in the history of *daoyin*, see Sakade 1986; and Despeux 1989: 228–230. See also Barrett 1980.

[13] On this text, see Yang 2018, especially Chapter 4: 262–341. Her comprehensive treatment of the *Treatise on the Origins and Symptoms of Disease* includes sections on textual history, authorship, terminology, structure, and a comparative analysis to other *daoyin* sources. She further supplies an expert and voluminous translation of the entries that prescribe guiding and stretching as a therapy (ibid.: 362–596).

on the *Scripture on Guiding and Stretching* (*Daoyin jing*; 4th century?) and the enigmatic *Essay by Daolin* (*Daolin lun*; *circa* 350 CE), to which we shall return.

By the 7th century, the Chinese practice of *daoyin* already enjoyed a rich and established tradition spanning multiple spheres of activity including religion, vernacular practice, and medicine. It also consistently exhibited stable features (breathing, stretching, animal symbolism, therapeutic aims or functions) across a variety of time periods and sources, some of them dating back to the 2nd century BCE, prior to any sustained and meaningful contact with India. Buddhism was perhaps the most significant vector of interchange between East and South Asia during the 1st millennium, but it was unknown in China before the mid-1st century; it is only in the late-3rd or 4th centuries that Buddhist and by extension Indian ideas and practices made a measurable cultural imprint in the Middle Kingdom.

It is against this backdrop of a long and celebrated autochthonous tradition of *daoyin* that two independent Tang Dynasty (618–908 CE) texts somewhat bemusingly point to India as the source of the guiding and stretching postures they present. These extraordinary references to trans-Himalayan origins have given rise to the hypothesis that the exercises may in fact constitute Sinicised versions of early yoga, which would have been subsequently domesticated and incorporated into Chinese religious or medical systems. The pages below will attempt to shed further light on the matter of Indian contributions to *daoyin* as well as on the wider issue of the transcultural circulation of posture-based self-cultivation disciplines.

Sun Simiao's Brahmanic Method of Indian Massage

The first of the two *daoyin* textual sources that refer to Indian origins is a chapter on "Nourishing [Inner] Nature" (*yangxing*)[14] from the *Essential Recipes for Urgent Need Worth A Thousand Cash* (*Beiji qianjin yaofang*), compiled around 652 CE. Its compiler Sun Simiao (trad. 581–682 CE), whom posterity would remember as a "King of Medicine" (*yaowang*), was an accomplished healer and consummate physician. At the time, it was far from uncommon for medical treatises to include sections on guiding and stretching or other Nourishing Life practices. It was far less common, however, to present *daoyin* postures

[14] Nourishing [Inner] Nature (*yangxing*) and Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*), although distinct concepts, express similar ideas about self-cultivation and are, in some cases, parallel notions. Stanley-Baker (2006: 49–60 and 28–33), however, argues that the former refers to simultaneously nurturing both the "interior self" and the "phenomenological self," whereas the latter points to nurturing vitality in terms of longevity and health alone.

as foreign. Sun Simiao introduces the set of eighteen postures as a type of "Massage from the Sindhu Kingdom" (*Tianzhu guo anmo*), and as he proceeds to clarify, "thus, a Brahmanic method" (*ci shi puluomen fa*). The epithet "Brahmanic" was used in mediaeval China as a general term of reference for anyone or anything of Indian provenance, regardless of religion or caste.[15] Similarly, *Tianzhu guo*, "Sindhu Kingdom," was an anachronistic designation for India. Finally, using "massage" (*anmo*) to denote stretches and breathing might *a priori* read as a misnomer, but from the end of the 600s, for a period of a few centuries, it was used interchangeably with *daoyin* (Yang 2018: 34–37).[16] In essence then, the annotation at the outset of the eighteen postures signals that they originated in India, according to Sun Simiao.

Before delving further into the issue of provenance, let us first consider what shape the exercises took. Since the relevant passage is brief (82.1a–2b), I provide a complete translation herein:

> Indian massage, thus a Brahmanic method.
>
> [1] Grasping both hands together, turn and twist them, as if washing your hands.
>
> [2] Shallowly clasping both [outstretched] hands together, turn them back to face your chest.
>
> [3] Grasping both hands together, jointly massage [the calves] with them on the left and right [sides] alike.
>
> [4] With the hands, do as if drawing a five-stone bow on the left and right [sides] alike.
>
> [5] Heavily massage the legs with both hands, gradually turning the body [as one proceeds lower].
>
> [6] Making a fist, strike out forwards, with left and right [hands] alike.
>
> [7] Make a fist and swing [outwards]. In this manner it opens the chest. Do this with left and right [hands] alike.
>
> [8] Do as in the method of rubbing [a copy] of a stone [inscription], with left and right [hands] alike.

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[15] The term "yoga," transliterated as *yujia*, existed in mediaeval China but it denoted either the Yogācāra school of Buddhism or, more commonly, the practices and techniques of the esoteric/Tantric Buddhist lineage and by extension, esoteric/Tantric Buddhism itself.

[16] Massage is not a significant component of yogic exercises in India.

[9] With the hand, pummel the opposite side of the upper back, on the left and right [sides] alike.

[10] Pressing the ground with both hands, contract the body and curve the spine, then stretch upwards three times.

[11] Holding the head with both hands, turn [the elbows] towards the top of the legs. Thus, it stretches the flanks.

[12] From a seated position, bend the body and incline it as if pushing aside a mountain [with one hand]. Do this with the left and right [sides] alike.

[13] From a seated position, extend both feet then, [raising] one foot in the air, pull it in [and extend out again]. Do this with the left and right [feet] alike.

[14] Pushing off the ground with both hands [while kneeling], look back [to one side]. Thus is the method of the Tiger Gazing.[17] Do this on left and right [sides] alike.

[15] Standing, join both hands to the ground by bending back [down] and rising up thrice.

[16] Tightly clasping both hands together, plant the foot inside the hands [and extend]. Do this with the left and right [feet] alike.

[17] Stand up while one foot [swings] forth and back in the air. Do this with the left and right [feet] alike.

[18] From a seated position, extend both feet and use the opposite hand to join and hook the extended foot. Join the other hand to the knee [on the same leg] and press down. Do this on the left and right [sides] alike.

As for the above eighteen postures, those who can comply with their [requirements] thrice daily, even if elderly, after one month, the hundred illnesses will all be dispelled and they will [be able] to move about to the extent of a speeding steed. They will enjoy endless benefits. Their years will be extended and their destiny lengthened. They will regain appetite, their eyes will be brightened, their body lightened and never again will they be tired.[18]

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[17] This method is described below in the second text with Brahmanic postures.

[18] The standard version of Sun Simiao's medical summa is included in the Daoist Canon of 1445 but it is based on an earlier Song-dynasty (960–1279) recension of the 7th-century text. The postures from this version exhibit a few lacunae which can be filled in, however, when comparing to another version of the exercises from the Daoist Canon contained in the Tang-dynasty period *Daolin's Essay on Preserving Life* (*Daolin*

At first glance, the movements that Sun Simiao relates appear to be very much in line with the autochthonous Chinese tradition first documented in 186 BCE in the *Book of Stretches*. In the intervening eight hundred years or so, they had become a bit more complex and, in this instance at least, they are intended for general wellness rather than specific afflictions. Yet, overall their tenor and format are fully consistent with Chinese *daoyin*. These postures, however, are labelled as Indian.

One could raise the argument of prestige to rationalise the emphasis on Indian provenance. Indeed, at the time that Sun Simiao compiled his text, Buddhism was at its zenith in China. During the Tang period, it enjoyed unprecedented support from ruling elites and commoners alike, and due to tax and other exemptions, the clergy reached pinnacles of wealth never again attained. Sun Simiao was highly sympathetic towards Buddhism, infusing his practice of medicine not only with new ideas from Ayurvedic medicine (which was brought into China via Buddhists) but also explicitly Buddhist principles such as compassion, cutting off desire, and alleviating the suffering of sentient beings.[19] It is safe to say that Sun Simiao had a pronounced inclination towards Buddhism, Ayurvedic medicine, and Indian culture in general. Yet, he was also deeply informed about Daoism and very familiar with the history of *daoyin*. His personal proclivities could perhaps explain the insistence on foreign origins, but it is highly unlikely that they would have pushed him to essentially lie and wantonly pass off a Chinese set of guiding and stretching exercises as Indian if he patently knew that they were not, simply for the purpose of increasing prestige. His readers, by and large an educated and informed demographic, would have also easily seen through such a transparent ploy since *daoyin* was already recognised as an illustrious and quintessentially Chinese tradition. The eighteen postures would assuredly not have benefitted from being labelled as foreign. Sun Simiao therefore must have had good reason to add his annotation about Indian origins, one that he found in the source text for the passage.

Sun Simiao was indeed working from a preexisting account of the postures. He does not cite such a text outright; however, the exercises appear in *Daolin's Essay on Preserving Life*

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shesheng lun; DZ 1427), 13a–14b, on which see below. Thus, my translation, while based on the *Essential Recipes* also partly relies on the *Daolin's Essay*. The *Essential Recipes* also appears in a late-18th century reprint as part of the imperial series *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu*). For a recent, excellent translation of the eighteen postures using the Daoist Canon version of Sun Simiao's text, see Stanley-Baker 2017: 628–630.

[19] See for example, *Essential Recipes* 1.16b, cited in Steavu 2017: 40; see also Sakade Yoshinobu 1992.

(*Daolin shesheng lun*), conservatively dated to the Tang period but likely earlier.[20] There are minor discrepancies between the sets from the *Essential Recipes* and *Daolin's Essay*, but there is no doubt they are the same postures. What is more, in addition to guiding and stretching, *Daolin's Essay* (1a–10b) as a whole overlaps with fascicles 81 to 83 of the *Essential Recipes* (81.9a–18a), among which one section is explicitly titled "Daolin's Nourishing [Inner] Nature" (*Daolin yangxing*). Sun Simiao was therefore familiar with the text and unquestionably relied on it in for the Nourishing Life parts immediately before and after his section on Brahmanic *daoyin*. There is little doubt *Daolin's Essay* also served as the source for the passage on guiding and stretching in between.

What is most consequential for our purposes, however, is the identity of the text's author, Daolin. There is a bit of controversy surrounding the matter, but to give a succinct account, some scholars identify Daolin as a Han-dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) Daoist transcendent, whose full name was Diao Daolin (Stanley-Baker 2006: 125–130; Barrett 1980: 171).[21] Very little information survives about him, nevertheless we may gather that he was a master associated with certain Nourishing Life methods including ingesting embryonic vital breath (*fu taiqi*) and sexual techniques pertaining to the arts of the bedchamber.[22] There is no specific mention of a connection to *daoyin*. The majority of scholars, however, concur that Daolin refers to Zhi Daolin (314–366 CE), otherwise known as Zhi Dun, a renowned Buddhist monk and philosopher.[23] In his writings, Zhi Dun drew on the *Book of Master Zhuang*, a fundamental text for Daoism that introduces Nourishing Life, including as we have seen, guiding and stretching; he was also famously interested in medicinal substances (*yao*), a discipline that was also

[20] The text notably draws on the lost 4th-century *Collected Essentials on Nourishing Life* (*Yangsheng yaoji*); see Stanley-Baker 2006: 130 and Despeux 1989: 231–232.

[21] Barrett who initially proposed that Daolin was a Han-dynasty transcendent revisits his position a few years later; see Barrett 1982: 41.

[22] See *Declarations of the Perfected* (*Zhengao*; DZ 1016), 14b; and *Records of Cultivating [Inner] Nature and Extending Life* (*Yangxing yanming lu*; DZ 838), 2.12ab, respectively. Both passages are translated in Stanley-Baker 2006, the first on 126 and the second on 128. Stanley-Baker (2006: 130) argues that the association between Daolin and sexual techniques would have precluded him from being a Buddhist monk, but it should be underscored that the "arts of the bedchamber" bore no particular stigma, at least not in the therapeutic context of Nourishing Life, where they were placed on equal footing with dietetics, *daoyin*, and other para-medical practices. Ties to sexual practices, in my view, are not sufficient to discount Daolin's Buddhist identity. For more on embryonic breathing (*taixi*), see below.

[23] See, for example, Barrett 1982: 41; Despeux 1989: 231–232; Lévi and Vandermeersch 2004: 95–96.

subsumed under Nourishing Life.[24] Indeed, less than a century after his death, in addition to being a celebrated Buddhist thinker, Zhi Dun was considered by Daoists as an immortal (*xianren*) (Barrett 1982: 41).[25]

Given his ties to Nourishing Life and Daoism, Zhi Dun/Zhi Daolin is a likely candidate as the author of *Daolin's Essay*. His period of activity, the mid-4th century, also corresponds with the dates of materials cited in the source.[26] Moreover, Zhi Dun had forged an impressive reputation for himself during the 300s, one which extended into the centuries after his death. References in *Daolin's Essay* and other *daoyin* texts[27] to the "style" name (*zi*) "Daolin" alone, without the customary presence of a surname, suggest that the denoted figure enjoyed substantial fame; enough so that the mention of a surname was not necessary. Since the Han-dynasty immortal was a relatively obscure figure and Zhi Dun was widely known, it would make more sense to refer to the latter simply as Daolin rather than by the former name.

Nevertheless, in *Daolin's Essay*, the postures are not explicitly designated as Brahmanic nor is there any allusion made to their Indian origins. It is Sun Simiao who emphasises this point by adding the annotation at the outset of the section dealing with the postures, thereby pointing to an author or source that would have been in his estimation associated with India—through Buddhism for instance. This is of some consequence for the following reason: if Daolin was indeed the 4th-century Buddhist Zhi Dun, he would have had direct access to Indic sources or Chinese sources concerning India—travelogues, accounts of pilgrims, diplomatic reports, and so on—at

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[24] *Expanded Collection for the Spread of the [Buddhist] Light* (*Guanghong mingji*; T.2103), 30.350ab, cited in Barrett 1982: 41.

[25] Barrett cites Yoshitoyo 1955: 199–200, who in turn, grounds his claim in a passage from the late 4th-century *Scripture of the Divine Spells of the Cavernous Abyss* (*Dongyuan shenzhou jing*; DZ 335), 4.9b, which indeed refers to the unmistakably Buddhist Zhi Daolin as an "immortal" (*xianren*). See also Mollier 1990: 59.

[26] For example, the text cites the *Master Who Embraces Simplicity: The Inner Chapters* (*Baopuzi neipian*; DZ 1118), completed in 317 CE. See *Daolin's Essay*, 2b and 4b.

[27] Indeed, Daolin, whether a Han-dynasty Daoist immortal or a 4th-century Buddhist monk, was incontestably a patriarch of early-mediaeval *daoyin* traditions. He is closely associated with the touchstone 4th-century *Collected Essentials on Nourishing Life* (*Yangsheng yaoji*), now lost; he is also one of the key figures in the *Records of Cultivating [Inner] Nature and Extending Life* (*Yangxing yanming lu*), compiled between the mid-7th and the mid-8th centuries, which takes the *Collected Essentials on Nourishing Life* as its foundation. The only scripture in the Daoist Canon exclusively dedicated to the topic of *daoyin*, the *Scripture on Nourishing Life through Guiding and Stretching* (*Daoyin yangsheng jing*; DZ 818), 17b, also mentions him by name, in addition to including breathing practices from *Daolin's Essay*. See Barrett 1980: 173–174; Stanley-Baker 2006: 125–130; on the relation between these texts, see Despeux 1989: 226–233.

least more so than a Han-dynasty Daoist recluse. As Stanley-Baker concedes: "whoever Daolin was, it appears that he was in contact with immigrant health practices during the Wei-Jin period [265–420 CE], a time of extensive foreign influx and influence" (2006: 130).[28] It is among these sources that he would have encountered a description of the Brahmanic postures, which he would have adapted to local conventions and expectations (i.e. "sinified") and then incorporated in his treatise on Nourishing Life—or so we may surmise, for much of this remains presumptive. Nevertheless, this is one possible scenario for explaining the label that Sun Simiao's imposed on that particular set of exercises. It also exemplifies one of the ways in which any knowledge from India, whether pertaining to physical disciplines, or more broadly to religion or medicine, entered China.

The scenario by which Indian postural disciplines would have made their way to mediaeval China, however, still presents some knots that require untangling. A major one is that it presumes there were proto-*āsana*s circulating in India between the 4th century (when Zhi Dun was alive) at the earliest and the 7th century (when Sun Simiao compiled his work) at the latest, and that these would have been transmitted either orally or in texts that are no longer extant, the former being most probable. There are, nonetheless, some surviving mediaeval Indian written accounts of seated *āsana*s and several of the earliest non-seated *āsana*s can be traced to pre-Common Era ascetic traditions documented in a variety of early mediaeval sources, Buddhist, historical, or epic. Yet, these accounts are few, laconic, and sparse. The earliest Indic written records of codified and mature yogic *āsana*s date only from the first half of the 2nd millennium (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 86–95). But if we maintain that postural disciplines could not have existed prior to that point, as certain scholars do, that would imply the Chinese effectively invented the idea of *āsana*s centuries before it appeared in India. And in light of the existence of early mediaeval Sino-Indian networks of pilgrims, travelling monks, and Buddhist envoys, we should also be willing to accept that if oral and/or lost postural self-cultivation disciplines did exist in India before the 4th century, they could have developed, at least partially, as a result of input from Chinese *daoyin*. To put it simply, the road to interchange is a two-way street.

Wang Zhongqiu's "Brahmanic Guiding and Stretching"

A second mediaeval Chinese Daoist source signals the Indian provenance of a set of guiding and stretching postures. The mid-Tang-dynasty *Collected Records on Preserving*

[28] For a concise discussion of how travellers between India, China, and Central Asia were instrumental in the circulation of knowledge pertaining to yoga and Daoism, see Alter 2009, especially 218–222.

Life (*Shesheng zuanlu*) by Wang Zhongqiu (alt. Wang Liqiu) presents twelve *daoyin* postures that it labels "Brahmanic guiding and stretching methods" (*poluomen daoyin fa*). The text is related to the same constellation of *daoyin* sources mentioned in the preceding pages. There are notable connections to the content of the *Scripture on Nourishing Life through Guiding and Stretching* (*Daoyin yangsheng jing*) and the *Records of Cultivating [Inner] Nature and Extending Life* (*Yangxing yanming lu*).[29] Furthermore, its twelve postures exhibit some overlay and share generic correspondences with the eighteen movements from Sun Simiao's *Essential Recipes for Urgent Need* (and by extension the twelve postures from *Daolin's Essay*), but they are in the end a distinct and freestanding set of exercises. Below is a translation of the passage in its entirety from *Collected Records*, 2a–3a:

> 1. Dragon stretching: with both hands push up above [your head] and [stretch out] in a posture that resembles drawing a bow. Do the same on the left and right [sides]. Then, clasp both hands together, grasping them above the head.
>
> 2. Turtle stretching: sitting upright, with both feet stretched out [lit. in the shape of the Chinese logogram for "eight"], press down on the knees with the hands while rocking. Then, turn the head to the left and to the right [while continuing to rock].
>
> 3. Unicorn coiling: leaning outwards [on one's belly], fold the hands to support the head. Bringing the [head] almost to the legs, bend your legs up [and back], pulling them to your buttocks, joining [feet and head] at the top. Then, with the legs straight (lit. facing forward), [now] curve back one leg [while keeping the other straight].
>
> 4. Tiger gazing: in the manner of both hands pressing [against the ground], stretch out the body looking back towards the rear. Do this on the left and right [sides].
>
> 5. Crane rising: standing up, steadily crane your neck back [and to the side]. Stretch to the left and right [sides].

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[29] Compare *Collected Records on Preserving Life* (*Shesheng zuanlu*; DZ 578), 2a–3a to *Essential Recipes*, 82.1a–2b; *Daolin's Essay*, 1a–10b; *Scripture on Nourishing Life through Guiding and Stretching*, 17b–19a; and *Records of Cultivating [Inner] Nature and Extending Life* (*Yangxing yanming lu*; DZ 838), 2.4a–8a, especially 2.4ab. The passage from the latter text is translated in Stanley-Baker 2006: 113–124; other passages from the *Collected Records on Preserving Life* are common to texts from the same group. Cf., for example *Collected Records on Preserving Life*, 1a–2a to *Scripture on Nourishing Life through Guiding and Stretching*, 19ab. Broadly speaking, the overlap in all of these sources converge on the figure of Daolin and point to the *Collected Essentials on Nourishing Life* (*Yangsheng yaoji*), which was also associated with Daolin, as a shared ur-source.

> 6. Firebird seeking: standing up, gradually step forwards with your feet, all the while clenching your fists and whipping the arms back and forth.
>
> 7. Duck Soaring: while dropping down [inclining] the body, grasp the hands together high in the back, above, and gradually rotate [from side to side].
>
> 8. Bear rousing: [seated, with arms extended] swiftly, clasp both hands together and overturn them so that they face your chest. Wrap your knees and bring the top of the head to them, then wobble [front and back and from side to side].
>
> 9. Winter pine in a snowy sky: from a seated position, lean down on the knees with your hands. Slowly lower your head, shake it right and left, then gradually turn it [from one side to the other].
>
> 10. Winter cypress defying the wind: with both hands pressing/leaning on [the legs], either bent over or standing, stretch out to the left and to the right, pushing [yourself] slightly further every repetition.
>
> 11. Immortal pushing up heaven: from a seated position, incline the body and lean on one side, with both hands like the sturdy trees of a forest, as if pushing up Heaven.
>
> 12. Phoenix beating [its wings]: beat the opposite shoulder with the hands and move down the arm. Return to beat the top of the back and move down to the waist and legs. [Repeat] three or more times each time.
>
> Perform these [methods] pushing [yourself] slightly further every repetition. However, if you adopt [the methods] quickly and become skilful, you should not overdo it, otherwise it will result in exhaustion.

Even at a glance, these twelve exercises are distinct from the other Brahmanic set from Sun Simiao's *Essential Recipes*. There are similar movements, possibly even some overlap: posture 1, "dragon stretching," seems ostensibly close to Sun Simiao's posture 4. The same can be said about postures 4 "tiger grazing," 5 "crane rising," and 6 "firebird seeking" from the current list with respect to postures 14, 15, and 17 from the previous one.[30] Yet these are a fraction of the total postures and despite similarities in the physical movements, the instructions are still formulated differently. In the present text, the directives are more fleshed out, the movements are numbered, and all of them

[30] Posture 4 from the *Collected Records* and posture 14 from the *Essential Recipes* not only describe the same movement, but they also bear the same title, "tiger gazing." Postures 8 ("bear rousing") and 11 ("immortal pushing") from the Collected Records also appear to partially correspond to or constitute variations of postures 2 and 12 from the *Essential Recipes*.

are titled. There are also six fewer postures. Thus, these appear to constitute a separate series of exercises, or at most, a considerably different interpretation of the same core set of generic postures.

Regrettably, almost nothing is known about Wang Zhongqiu, the compiler of the *Collected Records*, so we cannot look to him for clues about possible links to India. The only connections we may tease out come from the text's general relation to the figure of Daolin or the mention of "Brahmanic" in the heading of the section where the postures appear. We can also signal that the location of the postures in the text might be significant—they precede an elaborate account of a Buddhist breathing technique ascribed to a Tang-dynasty monk by the name of Master Luan (Luan *xiansheng*).[31] Here too, in the absence of evidence to the contrary and as in the case of the *Essential Recipes*, it is possible to accept the compiler's claims at face value and consider the practices to be derivative of South Asian ones in some capacity.

As signalled earlier, the argument of repackaging content as Indian to increase prestige would make sense were it not for the fact that *daoyin* was already a very prestigious autochthonous tradition. Further, all other patently non-Chinese elements in the *Collected Records* and the *Essential Recipes* are, to my knowledge, correctly identified as foreign (usually Buddhist or Indian). Why would these postures be such a conspicuous exception to the rule? But even the most sceptical reader will have to admit that it would have made little sense to add the "Brahmanic" label to the postures unless it was already known that similar practices or *āsana*s in some form already existed in India. In that case, would it not be safe to assume that Sun Simiao and Wang Zhongqiu were genuinely convinced of the foreign provenance of the postures? In any event, there is no sensible indication that the claims are spurious and therefore, there is little reason to be unduly suspicious.

The extent to which the movements were derivative of Indian postural practices in the way that they appear in the received versions of our two Brahmanic Chinese sources is another question. A perusal of Indian haṭhayogic manuals reveals some superficial similarities. For example, posture 8 from the *Collected Records*, "bear rousing," which enjoins the adept to "Wrap your knees and bring the top of the head to them, then wobble [front and back and from side to side]" is evocative of the "millstone pose" (*dṛṣadāsana*) from the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* (*Instructions on the Practice of Haṭha*), which exhorts practitioners to "lie down on the back, place the knees on the chest,

[31] *Collected Records*, 3a–12b. The mention of Master Luan's name occurs at 10b. He has an entry in the eleventh-century *New History of the Tang* (*Xin Tang shu*), 59.1568, cited in Despeux 2004: 356.

wrap the arms around the joined lower and upper legs and rock to the left and right" (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 124). Similarly, the eighteenth posture from the *Essential Recipes*, requires adepts to: "From a seated position, extend both feet and use the opposite hand to join and hook the extended foot. Join the other hand to the knee [on the same leg] and press down. Do this on the left and right [sides] alike." It is redolent of the "shaking pose" from the *Haṭharatnāvalī* (*String of Pearls of Haṭha*): "sitting on one heel, stretch out the other leg and take hold of its toes with that hand. Hold the other heel with the other hand. [...] Practice it on both sides" (ibid.: 119).

Still, despite these tantalising similarities, it should be acknowledged that Indian correspondences with the mediaeval Chinese Brahmanic postures are not perfect matches, as in the two cases cited above. And to muddle things further, they appear in early modern sources: the *Haṭharatnāvalī* and the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* date from the 18th and 19th centuries respectively, well over a thousand years after the times of Sun Simiao and Wang Zhongqiu. Indic sources from the first half of the 2nd millennium that deal with yogic postural disciplines or earlier texts that mention proto-*āsana*s (such as seated meditative or ascetic postures) would be an ideal terrain from which to excavate signs of prior interchange. A large-scale systematic collaborative and comparative analysis of Chinese, Indian, and other documents dealing with postural self-cultivation disciplines is manifestly necessary. In the meantime, we must rely on the available evidence, however deductive it may be, to draw preliminary conclusions. The *Essential Recipes* and *Collected Records* establish that Indian *āsana*s were known in China by the 7th century in one form or another. If the pair of texts do incorporate some measure of elements from Indian postures, they would also strongly suggest that such postures were assimilated into *daoyin* and adapted to meet the expectations of Chinese practitioners early on. At the absolute minimum, as highlighted above, even if one insists that the two sources are simply slapped-on Indian labels on *daoyin* postures for the sake of prestige, the Chinese still had knowledge of the existence of posture-based self-cultivation in India—and this a number of centuries before the earliest extant written records of yogic *āsana*s were penned.[32] But there are other correspondences outside the scope of these two texts that warrant further investigation as well.

[32] Some murals from the Dunhuang Mogao caves confirm this. See Wang Jinyu 2018: 261–262 and n. 23, 261–263. In one example dated to the Western Liang (400–421 CE), twenty bodhisattvas are depicted, engrossed in what is either an ecstatic seated dance (*wutao*) in response to the Buddha's sermon or, according to Wang, "an early form of Qi cultivation with Buddhist characteristics" that would have been practised in India (2018: 261).

Some Broader Parallels and Connections

Correspondences between Indian and Chinese self-cultivation practices have received initial consideration from previous scholars. Sinologist Livia Kohn for instance uses some of the broad conceptual points of contact between yoga and *daoyin* as a springboard into a more granular comparative inquiry. She points to some convergence with *daoyin*, most notably in the form of breathing practices or postures as described in sources such as the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* (*Light on Haṭhayoga*; 15th century), but ultimately concludes that the systems are at odds, emerging and developing in completely different contexts, and holding fundamentally distinct views of the body (Kohn 2006: 140–147).[33] Others are more optimistic with respect to the possibility of connections. In his foreword to a special issue of the *Journal of Asian History* on Sino-Indian interactions, sinologist Victor Mair speculates that Indian yogic principles and/or practices, spanning from non-action and the channelling of *prāṇāyāma* to anal/urethral contractions (*aśvinīmudrā*) and imagery revolving around vital breath channels or the heart, entered China as early as the 5th to 3rd centuries BCE. Thus, for Mair, the "blowing and breathing" or the "hanging bear" from the *Book of Master Zhuang* and, by extension, the postures from the "Chart of Guiding and Stretching" are products of the mass cultural transfer that occurred during an axial age which not only imbricated China and India, but also Persia and Greece (Mair 2004: 88–91; Maspéro 1955: 90–91). From this perspective, Chinese *daoyin* would have developed from early and primarily orally-transmitted yogic systems of self-cultivation (that were themselves at least partly informed by Persian or Greek precursors).[34] Yet, once again, by that token, one could also speculate that Chinese practices might have made their way back to India to

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[33] Kohn (2008: 7–19) revisits some of these positions more recently; useful albeit brief comparisons between certain *daoyin* postures and haṭhayogic *āsana*s are peppered throughout.

[34] Scholars believe traces of these systems are preserved in the 3rd–4th century CE *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* or related meditation manuals, but Chinese translations mention nothing that could be deemed an *āsana*. Dharmarakṣa's (Zhu Fahu) late 3rd-century translation of the *Yogācārabhūmisūtra* of Saṇgharakṣa, the *Stages of the Path of Practice* (*Xiuxing daodi jing*; T.606), 2.195c, 4.212a, 217b, only mentions "sitting cross-legged" or "in the lotus position" (*jie jiafu zuo*); the 5th-century *Dhyāna Sūtra of Dharmatrāta* (*Damoduoluo chan jing*; T. 618) describes some breathing practices, visualisations of decaying corpses, and concentration techniques, but no postures; on these, see Greene 2012: 48–63, 68–75, as well as Chapters 3 and 4, passim. Lastly, the 5th-century *Sūtra on the Secret Essentials and Methods of Dhyāna* (*Chan mi yao fa jing*; T.613), 1.243b, contains the first complete description in Chinese of the stereotypical Chan (*dhyāna*) meditation posture:

> Śrāmanas should [find] a quiet place to spread out their *niṣīdana* (mat) and sit cross-legged. They should adjust their robes, straighten their bodies, and sit upright. They should bare their right shoulder and place their left hand atop their right hand, close their eyes and press against their palate by means of their tongue.

inform those orally-transmitted or early yogic systems very soon thereafter, decisively shaping their more mature instantiations. Conjectures aside, with respect to postural disciplines at least, precise textual corroboration of contact or exchange is sorely lacking before the early-mediaeval and mediaeval periods, which happen to coincide with the height of the Buddhist influx into China.

Indeed, the 4th to 9th centuries were a period of enlightenment of sorts marked by widespread cosmopolitanism, a spirit of inquisitiveness, and a genuinely global outlook, the likes of which were never again witnessed in Chinese history.[35] Established trade networks and sustained diplomatic ties connected China to Europe, Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. India, however, was the closest polity of comparable cultural heft and the Chinese were eager to learn from their neighbours from across the Himalayas. Via peripatetic pilgrims, errant translators, and roving political advisors, it is during this period that Buddhism left an indelible imprint on China. Knowledge from other fields outside of the realm of religion (although, in many instances Buddhists still functioned as a conduit for their transmission) including from those of linguistics, literature, and statecraft, also made an appreciable impact; as did scientific and technological knowledge pertaining to astronomy, engineering, agriculture, and, most germane to our interests, medicine.[36] With this massive inrush of

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These are detailed instructions on the correct posture to assume during meditation, but they do not constitute an *āsana* in the haṭhayogic sense of the term nor, I would argue, are they an early precursor thereof; for a largely parallel translation of the passage, see Greene 2012: 80 n.13. Moreover, seated meditation existed in China since the 4th century BCE, mentioned most notably in the *Book of Master Zhuang*, 6.9, under the name "sitting and forgetting" (*zuowang*):

> Loosening my limbs and body, I block out my senses; I leave my physical form and depart from my thoughts. One with the Great Way, this is what they call sitting and depart from my thoughts. One with the Great Way, this is what they call sitting and forgetting.

Thus, the method of seated meditation that later became the hallmark of Chan had very early indigenous antecedents on which it could draw. If one were inclined to follow a line of reasoning closer to Mair's, however, the argument could be made (but probably not supported) that even these prototypical forms of seated meditation found in the *Book of Master Zhuang* were transmitted from India and indebted to earlier South Asian forms methods of contemplation.

[35] For introductory surveys, see Mark Edward Lewis 2009a, 2009b.

[36] There is a wealth of studies on these variegated topics. For medicine, which is closest to our concerns due to its overlap with self-cultivation, the work of Chen Ming is incomparable, but usually accessible only to readers of Chinese. He has published a few articles in English; see for example Chen Ming 2007 and 2006. Pierce Salguero's 2014 research centres on similar questions of transmission, but with a focus on Buddhist medicine, more specifically. For a general perspective see Bagchi 1951; see also Alter 2009.

ideas from India coupled with a heightened Chinese receptivity, it would be surprising if elements relating to self-cultivation, including *āsana*s would not have trickled through as well.

Scholars outside of Sinology took up the topic of correspondences between Indian yogic disciplines and Chinese *daoyin* decades earlier. Indologist Jean Filliozat penned the impactful "Taoïsme et Yoga" in 1949. Drawing on Henri Maspéro's pioneering work in the emerging field of Daoist Studies for Chinese content, Filliozat connected Indian and Chinese "pneumatic physiology." He concentrated on a few shared general concepts and, most saliently, common breathing techniques: "embryonic breathing" (*taixi*), for instance, which fell under the rubric of Nourishing Life and is related to *daoyin* breath control, is formulated much in the same terms as haṭhayogic *prāṇāyāma*.[37] He also directly addressed the similarities between yogic *āsana*s and *daoyin* postures, albeit without going into much detail (Filliozat 1969: 74–75).

Alchemy is another point of intersection between China and India noted by Filliozat (1969: 46–48, 76–77). Although it constitutes its own discipline, separate from yoga, *haṭhayoga* in particular employs alchemical imagery in discussing the refinement and transformation of internal energies or breath. In China, alchemy largely emerged and developed as a Daoist pursuit, but it was always considered separate from the lesser art (*xiaoshu*) of guiding and stretching because it granted immortality, whereas the latter only afforded longevity. Sexual practices too are not strictly speaking an ingredient of yoga, yet they have been incorporated to varying degrees (ibid.: 65–69). In China, they were distinct from *daoyin*; however, falling under the same heading of Nourishing Life, they were more closely related than was alchemy, a separate discipline altogether.

On the topic of sexual practices, Filliozat devotes a few pages to concordances between the haṭhayogic *vajrolīmudrā* and the Chinese principle of "returning the essence (or

[37] The original "Taoïsme et Yoga" article was published in 1949 in the journal *Dâm Viêt-nam*; in these pages, however, I rely on the subsequent revised and expanded version, Filliozat 1969. Filliozat refers to Henri Maspéro 1937: 177–252 and 353–430; as well as Maspéro 1950, especially the section on "Les Adeptes taoïstes et la recherche de l'immortalité: techniques corporelles." The Indologist finds resonance between general physiological concepts, 54; the Mysterious Female (*Xuanpin*) and Kuṇḍalinī, 53–54; between the yogic interpretation of *nirvāṇa* and the "muddy pellet" (*niwan*)—a term sometimes used in transliterating *nirvāṇa* from Sanskrit but which primarily denotes the centre of Daoist subtle physiology, located in the head, where practitioners direct vital breath in order to refine it, 52–53. These correspondences are interesting but less convincing, I would argue, than those concerning specific forms of breath control. See Filliozat 1969: 51 on embryonic breathing, and 57–63 on general or other breathing practices.

semen)[38] to supplement the brain" (*huanjing bunao*). These are rather striking as far as parallels go, thus they merit a brief but pertinent parenthesis. "Returning the essence to supplement the brain" is an "art of the bedchamber" (*fangzhong shu*) and thus a practice that fell under the aegis of Nourishing Life. It prescribed halting conventional ejaculation in men by applying pressure on the perineum at the moment of climax in order to block the urethra, and, through breath control, redirecting emissions up along the spinal cord and into the cranial cavity (Filliozat 1969: 65–66). The *locus classicus* for this practice is a passage from the *Biographies of Immortals* (*Lie xian zhuan*; 77–8 BCE), which explains:

> [The immortal] Master Cheng Gong [...] was skilled in supplementing [essence] and guiding [breath], and in drawing essence from the Mysterious Female, [a practice] whose essentials lie in nourishing spirit so as to not die. [Death is averted through this practice] because one protects life and nourishes vital breath. White hair will turn black again and fallen teeth will grow anew.[39]

In and of itself, these lines are quite cryptic, but a commentary on the passage elaborates: "This art of intercourse with women refers to firmly holding on so as not to spill out and returning the essence/semen to supplement the brain."[40] Through this

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[38] In Chinese, *jing* can be translated either as "essence" (in a bio-spiritual sense) or "semen" (in a physiological sense) depending on the context. In materials pertaining to the art of the bedchamber, which play on that ambiguity, the term can be rendered either way. I have opted for "essence" in the following pages save for a few instances in which the emphasis on "semen" is functionally important and/or highlights the connection to Indic sources.

[39] *Biographies of Immortals* (*Lie xian zhuan*) 6. See also Kaltenmark 1952: 55–58.

[40] Cited from Kalternmark 1952: 58. The most detailed surviving account of "returning the essence to supplement the brain" is from a 10th-century Japanese medical anthology, *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine* (*Ishinpō*), 28.18.3, which relies on citations from early-mediaeval and mediaeval Chinese sources, many of them Daoist. I include a translation of the central passage for the reader's convenience:

> The [lost] *Scripture of Immortals* [composed early 4th cent., *terminus ad quem*] says: "as for the way of returning the essence to supplement the brain, when one is engaged in intercourse and one's essence is greatly stirred and desires to come out, one should quickly, by means of the two main fingers (the index and major) of the left hand press down [on the space] behind the *yin* satchel [scrotum] and in front of the great cave (the anus)(i.e. on the perineum). During this great undertaking, while pressing down, one should draw in a long breath and then [resume] breathing [normally] without ceasing; concurrently click the teeth several dozen times [to summon the gods of the body]. Then, when one releases the essence, the essence will not come out; rather, from the jade stalk [the penis] it will return upward, entering the brain. This method was transmitted by

practice, longevity was thought to substantially increase since the operation avoided the expenditure of vital essence in the form of semen (which was considered a less-refined but equally precious form of vital breath) while, at the same time, supplementing the brain (which was understood to be made of the same substance as semen). This practice is attested from around the 1st century BCE or CE in sources dealing with Nourishing Life techniques.[41]

Later on, around the 10th century, it was adapted to *neidan*, "inner alchemy." This eclectic tradition borrowed much of its vocabulary and imagery of transformative processes from earlier laboratory alchemy (also known as operative alchemy or *waidan*,"external alchemy"), applying its concepts to the subtle body. *Neidan* also gleaned terminology and concepts from Buddhism, Daoist visualisation, Confucianism, and the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing*), combining them into an esoteric system of self-cultivation deployed through progressively elaborate cycles of contemplation, with the ultimate aim of transmuting the coarse body from the inside out.[42] In this context, much like other re-purposed physical practices, "returning the essence to supplement the brain" took on an entirely new meaning utterly stripped of any first-order sexual signification; it came to refer instead to the repeated cycling and processing of crude essence (*jing*) into the refined spiritual materia prima of vital breath (*qi*) and, eventually, spirit (*shen*). *Neidan*, therefore, is not as similar to the haṭhayogic practice of *vajrolīmudrā* as is sometimes suggested.[43] *Vajrolīmudrā,* a seal that prevents the loss of vital *bindu* through discharge, remains resolutely sexual and physical—not metaphorical (Mallinson 2018). It is thus more in line with earlier, pre-*neidan*, Nourishing Life understandings of "returning the essence to supplement the brain."

Immortal Lü. He made everyone [who received it] drink blood as a compact and [promise] not to recklessly circulate it [under penalty] of suffering misfortune."

[41] For a succinct overview of the topic, see Despeux 2008: 514–515. See also Needham 1983: 197–201. For a thorough analysis of the subject, see Van Gulik 2003, especially Chapters 1–8.

[42] For an example of "returning the essence to supplement the brain" in *neidan*, see Baldrian-Hussein 1984: 109–115, 136–137, and 260–270.

[43] On the basis of an erroneous conflation of the Nourishing Life understanding of "returning the essence to supplement the brain" and the later *neidan* conception, some scholars have mistakenly emphasised an imbrication of the generally coterminous *neidan* and *haṭhayoga* systems. Although there are perhaps some similarities, *haṭhayoga* has more in common with Nourishing Life than it does with *neidan*. Prevailing misconceptions might have originated with Needham's 1983: 257 inclusion of the term *neidan* in the title of a section, "Chinese physiological alchemy (*Nei Tan*) and the Indian Yoga, Tantric and Hathayoga systems," in which he actually discusses various practices associated with Nourishing Life and only tangentially broaches the topic of *neidan* proper.

In the context of sexual practices, the similarities between Nourishing Life and *haṭhayoga* are striking: in verses 158–160 of the 13th-century *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* (*Dattātreya's Discourse on Yoga*), male yogic practitioners are enjoined to draw in their semen after climax and move it upward to the head for storage since "semen preserved in this way truly overcomes death. Death [arises] through the fall of semen, life from its preservation" (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 242–243).[44] *The Records of Cultivating [Inner] Nature and Extending Life*, which predates the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* by roughly seven hundred years, explains at 1.3b. that if "essence" (*jing*), that is semen, "is depleted, it results in decay. The root of the body generates semen and semen is generated by spirit. If one does not use one's semen or dispense it, it results in being able to harmonize one's power with that of Heaven."[45] What is more, in the "arts of the bedchamber," the benefits of *coitus reservatus* are maximised when combined with a technique of drawing out vital essence or breath from the female partner's secretions. Hence, just as the *vajrolīmudrā* requires the yogi to "draw up through urethra the *rajas* from a woman's vagina and make it enter his body,"[46] the sexual techniques of Nourishing Life advise the following:

> If one desires to practise the way of Nourishing Life by means of gathering the vital breath through [harmonizing] Yin and Yang (i.e. intercourse), one cannot do so with one woman alone. One must obtain three, or nine, or even eleven women—the more the better—and extract their essence-fluid, making it ascend though the Vast Spring[47] to return it [to the brain]. [Thus] the complexion of the skin will be lustrous, the body will be light and the eyes bright, and the strength of one's vital breath will flourish so as to subdue all enemies. The elderly will be as

[44] For similar practices, see *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, 84–88 and *Vimalaprabhā*, 4.119 in ibid.: 387 and 29, respectively; see also 180–181 and 228–229 for more on *bindu* and yogic seals.

[45] I follow Stanley-Baker (2006: 78–79) in emending the third occurrence of the logograph *sheng* ("life," "to generate") to *jing* ("semen," "essence").

[46] *Śivasaṃhitā* 4.81–83; see also 95–97, from Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 250–252.

[47] It is unclear what this term refers to exactly. This could be the central channel of the subtle body, parallel to the spinal cord, but the image of a spring might better lend itself to the "lower cinnabar field" (*dantian*), an energy centre akin to either the *maṇipūra* or *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*s that is located slightly below and behind the navel.

> when they were twenty and the young will see their energy grow a hundredfold.[48]

Returning to Filliozat's seminal article, many of the threads that he followed were picked up by subsequent scholars interested in the intersection of Indian and Chinese posture-based self-cultivation. Citing his predecessor, Mircea Eliade considers the topic in a section from his *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* titled "Excursus: *Prāṇāyāma* in Extra-Indian Asceticism" (1958: 59–65). Like Filliozat, Eliade also discusses potential points of contact between Indian and Chinese self-cultivation in alchemy and sexual hygiene, two spheres of activity that orbit or in some cases are interwoven with postural disciplines.[49] From the perspective of Sinology, the prolific historian of science Joseph Needham developed many of the same themes, writing on the conjunction of Sino-Indian breathing methods, postures, alchemy, and sexual practices in his encyclopaedic multi-volume *Science and Civilization in China*.[50] Needham emphasised the circulation of knowledge and practices in the already globalised Classical and Mediaeval periods, introducing Persia, Greece, the Arab world, and Japan into the conversation. He also stressed that a larger proportion of the transit than usually credited occurred from China in the direction of India, particularly with respect to alchemy writ large and Tantrism as well. He sketched out webs of correspondences and outlined enticing possibilities upon which more recent generations of scholars, such as David White for instance, have built their own inquiries (1996: 52–66).[51]

White is notable among Indologists in that he seriously engages with the possibility that a good deal of the innovation behind Indian alchemy and early haṭhayogic practices was driven by contacts with China, especially along a maritime route that connected Southern India with the Middle Kingdom (1996: 52–53, 244–245, 251, 327–

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[48] From *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine*, 28.2.3, modified from Wile 1992: 102, which is reproduced in Paul Goldin's introduction to Van Gulik 2003: xxi.

[49] For alchemy, see Eliade 1958: 278–292, 416–419, n. 3–5; for sexual practices, see ibid. and 412–413, n.12.

[50] On sexual practices, see Needham 1956: 425–430; on alchemy, see Needham 1976: 160–167; for a monumental chapter on comparative alchemy, see Needham 1980: 323–509; and for a similarly impactful comparative treatment of Nourishing Life and yoga, see Needham 1983: 257–288. The same volume contains a thoroughly informative section on *daoyin*, 154–179, in which the author occasionally refers to Indian input.

[51] For a succinct overview of correspondences between yogic postural practices and *daoyin*, see also White 2009: 79–82. On alchemy and multi-polar, indeed, global mythemes that were pivotal in Chinese, Indian, and also Syriac alchemy, see White 2017.

328).[52] During the period under consideration, between the 6th and 9th centuries, alchemy, sexual practices, and also breathing and postural techniques had enjoyed in China a level of conceptual consistence and unity that was achieved in India only appreciably later; thus a transfer hypothesis from China to India during this period, for certain elements at least, would be conceivable. Although scarce, there are some historical documents to support this hypothesis: the Tamil Siddha (Sittar) traditions have documented connections with China or Chinese masters. These could very well have been the starting point from whence Daoist notions or practices would have entered India, taken on autochthonous forms, often Tantric, and then spread throughout the subcontinent (ibid.: 57–66, 60–64). *Haṭhayoga* in particular appears to have absorbed via Tantrism independent streams of input from both Nourishing Life sexual hygiene and Daoist alchemy before combining them with breathing and postural methods—some of which also display an independent parenthood with Daoist counterparts. For this reason, haṭhayogic sources constitute an optimal springboard for investigations into the presence of Chinese religious elements in India.[53]

In 1949 already, Filliozat perceptively suggested that as much as Indian yogic practices or ideas may have made their way into China between the 4th and 7th centuries through the vector of Buddhism, Daoist methods and notions could have just as easily crossed the Himalayas in the other direction (1969: 69–79). In the conclusion to his article, he explains: "It is indisputable that the basic principles of Yoga and pneumatic physiology, which are grounded in ideas attested since ancient times in India, cannot come from China. The ulterior development of its doctrines and practices, however, could have easily been subjected to Chinese influence. [...] Everything seems to suggest that the similarities between Daoism and Yoga noted above cannot only be fortuitous and that they are often the result of reciprocal exchange between their two cultures" (1969: 78–79).[54]

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[52] White's views on the matter have been generally adopted by subsequent scholars; see, for example, Samuel 2008: 278–282. However, in the twenty-five or so years since White published these views, not much in terms of new evidence has come to light.

[53] The idea that Daoism made a measurable imprint on India in general and yoga in particular through Indian Tantrism has gained some currency in Sinology; see for example Needham 1983: 283–284.

[54] Translated from French. He continues: "Unfortunately, it is still impossible to determine in each case the direction of influence, where influence was probable. It would be necessary to know exactly when each notion or practice arose among Yogis and Daoists. Only by knowing this would we able to determine who developed it [the notion or practice] first and supplied the model to the other" (ibid.: 79). More than half a century later, this problem largely persists.

Conclusion

It is now time to weave together some of the threads that we have followed in the different sections of this study, with the hope that, firstly, a somewhat more lucid understanding will have emerged of how Indian yogic postural practices and Chinese guiding and stretching *daoyin* techniques intersected; and secondly, a course of action for future inquiry will have become clearer. The opening section of this study served the purpose of a broad historical introduction to *daoyin*, but it also situated the practice within its oft-forgotten context of Nourishing Life. Initially, the various self-cultivation disciplines of Nourishing Life formed their own distinct complex of practices but eventually, during the mediaeval period, they fell under the umbrellas of Daoism as well as medicine. The second and third sections of the chapter consisted of a translation and brief analysis of two key *daoyin* passages from a pair of Tang-dynasty texts: Sun Simao's *Essential Recipes for Urgent Need Worth a Thousand Cash*, a medical treatise drawing on Daoist, Buddhist, and Nourishing Life notions; and Wang Zhongqiu's *Collected Records on Preserving Life*, a similarly diverse text but more bio-spiritual in scope than medical. These texts constitute the earliest surviving sources to unambiguously propose Indian origins for their postures. To what extent they retained Indian elements is an open question—by the time they appeared in Sun Simiao's and Wang Zhongqiu's compilations may have been completely transformed to look exactly like *daoyin* poses familiar to their readership. But to brush aside the "Brahmanic" labels that were conscientiously assigned to postures by historical actors with no established pattern of deceit and dismiss them as deliberate untruths or shrewd marketing simply because they do not match our current understanding is a dubious approach to scholarship (at best). Is it not sounder to allow for the possibility that what those actors are saying could actually be accurate than to intuitively contradict and reject their claims without evidence?

Finally, the last section of the study supplied the scholarly framework to negotiate our way out of the conundrum, situating our treatment of the sources in the context of a longstanding discussion on the question of interchange between Indian (primarily yogic) and Chinese (primarily Daoist) self-cultivation practices—one that allows for the multilateral transmission of knowledge. Jean-François Filliozat notably spearheaded the conversation more than seventy years ago, identifying a handful of tantalising correspondences. Subsequent scholars including Mircea Eliade, Joseph Needham, and most recently David White have gone into more depth and elaborated on Filliozat's findings, but the broad themes and methods of inquiry have stayed largely the same since the outset. Textually or otherwise verifiable cases of interchange remain elusive. The method of "returning the essence to supplement the brain," briefly considered

above, and the Brahamanic *daoyin* postures discussed in the foregoing pages are outliers in their vividness. This is not because there is a dearth of meaningful materials. Rather, scholars are most often working with one half of the necessary toolkit in what should be a genuinely comparative and inherently collaborative enterprise. Ideally, a thorough investigation would, at the minimum, involve experts on Persia and Tibet in addition to specialists of India and China. Indeed, India and China were nodes in a global mediaeval network of knowledge transmission, not simply two poles in a binary relationship.[55]

For instance, the Tibetan tradition of *tsa lung trul khor* (*rtsa rlung 'phrul 'khor*), "exercising channels and winds," known more popularly as Yantra Yoga, appears to have been a fulcrum in Chinese and Indian interchange surrounding postural disciplines. Few academic studies of this tradition exist, so details of its genesis and development remain blurry. Yet even from a cursory survey of primary sources or general treatments of *trul khor*, we may discern compelling echoes.[56] For example, the "bow pose" appears as the fourth posture in Sun Simao's mid-7th-century *Essential Recipes*. It is translated above but I reproduce here for the sake of convenience: "With the hands, do as if drawing a five-stone bow on the left and right [sides] alike." The same posture surfaces in the *Collected Records* too, as part of the "dragon stretching pose": "With both hands push up above [your head] and [stretch out] in a posture that resembles drawing a bow [...]." Centuries later it seemingly appears yet again in the *Great Perfection: A Compendium of Samantabhadra's Intent* (*Rdzogs chen kun bzang dgongs 'dus*) by Padma Lingpa (Padma gling pa; 1450–1521): "Fourteenth, like drawing a bow, pull three times to the left and three times to the right and, while crossing the arms, strike the point of the shoulder."[57]

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[55] Alter 2009: 228 makes a somewhat similar point, but he foregrounds how the inherent secrecy that is associated with esoteric yogic and Daoist practices is an important impediment to elaborating a linear diegetic history of interchange. As a remedy, he recommends a mimetic history instead. Not without a tint of playfulness, he insightfully concludes (or "inconcludes" as he would put it):

> Given the scope and scale of contact between eastern and southern Asia, that Central Asia was arguably a centre of cosmopolitan philosophy—rather than on the periphery of Yoga and Taoism—and how similar various aspects of Yoga and Taoism are, the fact that there is so little evidence for borrowing is precisely good evidence—of the indicative rather than the definitive kind—for why, in fact, there probably was.

[56] Readers may consider Baker 2018, Chaoul 2006; and Loseries-Leick 1997; for a recent and lavishly illustrated general introduction, see Baker 2019.

[57] Cited from Mallinson and Singleton 2017:113. See ibid.: 111–114 for a translation of the relevant section from this important source and 93–94 for more on *trul khor*. See also Baker 2018 for a careful study and translation of Padma Lingpa's text in relation to the postures depicted in the Lukhang murals.

We could conclude that such parallels support the notion that Indian yogic disciplines were disseminated both in China and, later, independently, in the Himalayan region of Central Asia. Yet, there is no direct connection between haṭhayogic practices and *trul khor*. As James Mallinson and Mark Singleton relate: "The absence in Indian texts of clear parallels with these Tibetan techniques adds weight to the claims found among certain Tibetan traditions that *'khrul 'khor* was either an indigenous Bön practice or originated in China" (2017: 93–94).[58] If we accept that the Brahmanic postures from our mediaeval Chinese texts were somehow derivative of early Indian *āsana*s, then the "bow pose" and others would have arrived in Tibet after a detour in China.

But the picture is not so neat. The "bow pose," in its standing variation (and surely other *trul khor* postures as well) was documented in China in the 2nd century BCE "Chart of Guiding and Stretching." Therefore, in light of the above discussion, the most likely scenario would be that the Chinese Brahmanic *daoyin* postures were a combination of autochthonous *daoyin* practices and Indian postures, or more conservatively perhaps, a collection of hybrid movements predominantly made up of *daoyin* components in combination with elements from Indian *āsana*s, such as sitting for instance. Whatever the case, these Brahmanic postures were quickly integrated into native systems and then re-circulated as wholly Chinese *daoyin* back to India, into Tibet, or elsewhere, via maritime and overland trade routes, (often Buddhist) diplomatic channels, or pilgrimage networks. At the same time, subsequent inflows of ideas and practices from outside of the Middle Kingdom continued to feed the development of *daoyin*, although after a prolonged period of flaunted cosmopolitanism and keen interest in anything beyond their cultural borders, the Chinese became much more reluctant to signal foreign origins. Yet, even after the Tang period, interchange continued to be multipolar and multidirectional, albeit deliberately occluded.

In addition to post-Tang nativism, the fact that *daoyin* postures were never fully codified further complicates tracing efforts. Thus, some of the Brahmanic postures from Sun Simiao's and Wang Zhongqiu's accounts visibly resurfaced in later *daoyin* sources whose compilers both elaborated new movements and relied on a combination of earlier sources for their repertoires—sometimes modifying pre-existing postures so that dependence on prior materials was not too telegraphic. The Daoist *Method of the Eight-Section Silk Brocade* (*Baduan jin fa*), which appears around the 12th century, is a case in point.[59] Among the eight movements that make up its sequence (see Fig. 2), half are

[58] See also Baker 2018: 360, 363–364, 377, whose draft Mallinson and Singleton refer to. In the published version of the paper, Baker is more ambiguous about the potential Chinese origins or *trul khor*.

[59] *Ten Books on the Cultivation of Perfection* (*Xiuzhen shishu*; DZ 263), 19.1a–5b. An early iteration of the

highly evocative of postures from our two mediaeval Brahmanic *daoyin* sets.[60] With advances in printing technology and the rise of commercial presses during Late Imperial times, the *Silk Brocade* in turn inspired countless vernacular iterations that continued to reuse and readapt earlier *daoyin* templates—apparently including the Indian-inspired postures that had been absorbed into autochthonous *daoyin* traditions in bygone centuries—circulating them both within and outside of China.

Figure 2: The eight postures from the *Method of the Eight-Section Silk Brocade* (*Baduan jin fa*) as they appear in the *Shortcuts [to Realization] by Various Authors* (*Zazhu jiejing*) section of the late 13th- or early 14th-century *Ten Books on the Cultivation of Perfection* (*Xiuzhen shishu*), 19.4a–5b.

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movements appears in a 12th-century Daoist encyclopaedia of *neidan*, the *Pivot of the Way* (*Daoshu*; DZ 1017), 35.17a–19a. Two versions of the movements are described in Hong Mai's (1123–1202) *Record of Yijian* (*Yijian zhi*) and by the 16th century, an advanced version with twelve postures instead of eight was circulating. See Despeux 2008: 336, for more on primary sources; and Kohn 2008: 180–184. See also Ng Pei-San 2016: 43–51.

[60] Compare postures 1, 4, 7, and 8 from the *Silk Brocade* to postures 11, 9, 15, and 13 from the *Essential Recipes*; and postures 7 and 4 from the *Silk Brocade* with 11 and 12 from the *Collected Records*. On the *Silk Brocade* see Needham 1983: 158–170; for more on its context, with respect especially to earlier *daoyin* sets and the later transmission of Daoist postures to Europe (with some discussion of yoga as well), see ibid.: 154–179.

Figure 3: Sample posture illustrations from Cibot's 1779 *Notice du cong-fu des bonzes Tao-sée*, in Amiot's Mémoires concernant l'histoire des Chinois, pl. 2–3, 451.

Later developments also support the model of a multipolar (re-)circulation of postural practices that were exoticised, imported, then domesticated, and finally exported in successive loops. Those popular vernacular *daoyin* manuals in the tradition of the *Silk Brocade* notably served as the source for Fr. Pierre-Martial Cibot's 1779 *Notice du cong-fu des bonzes Tao-sée*. The Jesuit's descriptive account also contains some theoretical analysis, as well as, most famously, a set of painstaking illustrations of twenty breathing and stretching postures, many of which are exact matches for the movements from the *Silk Brocade* (compare Fig. 3 with Fig. 2, for example).[61]

Cibot's account is significant not only because it documents the transmission of Chinese postures outside of China and, through their connection to the mediaeval Brahmanic sets, the circulation of potentially Indian *āsana*s as well; it also meaningfully constitutes a crucial link in the chain of knowledge transfer from East and South Asia to Europe and back to Asia again. Indeed, the *Notice* contributed the development of medical callisthenics in the guise of Pehr Henrik Ling's (1776–1839) Swedish Gymnastics.[62] As Nicolas Dally noted (1857: 155):

> Since [Swedish gymnastics] does not differ from the [*daoyin*] of the Taoists, we must also admit that Ling had in his hands on [Cibot's] *Notice* or some other original Chinese treatise, relayed either by other missionaries or by someone attached to embassies of Europe in China.

[61] For a useful overview of Cibot's *Notice*, see Needham 1983: 170–173.

[62] See Needham 1983:170–174; and Mark Singleton 2016.

> Ling's doctrine in its entirety, theoretical and practical, is only a sort of daguerreotypical carbon-copy of the Taoists' *kung-fu* (i.e. *daoyin*).[63]

Ling's Swedish gymnastics were inscribed in a discourse of modern European nationalistic/militarist physical culture, which was also White and Christian. Swedish gymnastics or versions thereof were taught in Britain through the education system and military training, or throughout the colonies via YMCA networks. It is under the guise of the latter in particular that the discipline of medical gymnastics, involving both postural callisthenics or stretches and controlled breathing, returned to India to spur and inform the development of modern yoga. This Indian re-iteration, originally nationalistic and anti-colonial, was appropriated by the West once more, culturally decontextualised, secularised, and commodified in the form of transnational global yoga.[64]

Thus, if the Brahmanic postures of mediaeval China contained even a fraction of Indian elements, then, by way of their integration into *daoyin* and subsequently, through their transnational incarnations as medical gymnastics, these elements have made their way to Europe and back to India again, before re-circulating throughout the world. This entangled, layered, and sometimes asymmetrical system of multipolar transmission and interchange might explain how certain popular postures of modern global yoga—such as the ones corresponding to the "cat pose" (*mārjārīyāsana*) or the "cycling pose" (*pādasañcalāsana*)—are attested in the mediaeval Brahmanic sets in China.[65]

We return to our initial question, is there such a thing as "Chinese Yoga"?—or, more accurately, did *āsana*s from India historically make their way to China and interact with autochthonous traditions of self-cultivation? To be clear, on the basis of current knowledge, the answer is somewhat equivocal, although tending towards the positive. Textual evidence, although scant, does exist, primarily in the shape of two mediaeval sets of postures identified by their compilers as Indian in provenance. Still, unless we identify earlier or coeval Indic sources as a textual control group to compare the Chinese materials, there is for the moment no way to conclusively determine exactly to what extent and how many of the *daoyin* movements from those two sets were rooted in

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[63] Translated from French; also cited in Needham 1983: 175–176.

[64] On this topic see Singleton 2010, especially Chapters 4 to 7; and Alter 2004.

[65] Posture 4, "tiger gazing," from the *Collected Records on Conserving Life* and posture 10 from the *Essential Recipes Worth A Thousand Cash* have a pronounced resemblance to the "cat pose"; see p. 388 and 389, above. Likewise, posture 13 from the *Essential Recipes* recalls the "cycling pose"; these similarities are noted by Stanley-Baker 2017: 537, n. 21, 23.

pre-existing *āsana*s. Nevertheless, China and India, two cultural giants, had sustained and verified exchanges in a number of fields since around the 1st century CE, if not earlier. Therefore, given a) the copious and substantiated circulation of knowledge in the adjacent fields of medicine, alchemy, and Buddhism; b) the longstanding shared interest in postural self-cultivation; and c) the slew of evocative parallels or overlap between *haṭhayoga* and *daoyin*, it is unlikely that in the span of two thousand years, Indian *āsana*s would not have made a mark on Chinese *daoyin* and/or *vice versa* (Alter 2009). Exactly when and to what extent remain unanswerable questions for the moment, but our Tang-dynasty sources, the *Essential Recipes for Urgent Need Worth a Thousand Cash* and the *Collected Records on Preserving Life*, suggest that denizens of the Middle Kingdom definitely had second-hand knowledge and likely first-hand knowledge of *āsana*s in some form by the 7th-century at the latest.

At this juncture, in order to make progress on the question of "Chinese Yoga," Indian *daoyin*, or other forms that transcultural posture-based self-cultivation might have taken, the necessity for large-scale multidisciplinary projects with a global scope is clear. In an effort to accurately reflect their objects of study, these projects would ideally include different sets of data (archaeological, material culture, iconography), but they should first and foremost be grounded in comparative multilingual textual-historical analyses tailored to match the specific challenges of understanding a complex multipolar commerce of ideas and practices.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express his gratitude to the volume's editors, Daniela Bevilacqua and Mark Singleton, as well as to José Cabezón and Joseph S. Alter for their insightful comments and meticulous input. I am especially grateful toward Dolly Yang for her close reading of the chapter, which generated a fruitful conversation and helped me reflect on some key issues. My thanks to the anonymous reader as well for their thought-provoking comments. All inaccuracies or infelicities that remain are mine alone.

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CITATION

Steavu, D. 2023. "Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Yoga? Indian Postural Therapies in Mediaeval China." In *Yoga and the Traditional Physical Practices of South Asia: Influence, Entanglement and Confrontation,* Eds. Daniela Bevilacqua and Mark Singleton. *Journal of Yoga Studies* (Special Issue): 375–412.